

## Making a Case for Adoption

What is your first reaction, when you hear the word adoption?

I know my paradigm has taken quite a shift on this since I was a child. I remember that it was one of those words that people whispered. Now I realize that God created adoption and because I was not born of Jewish decent I now am adopted into the family of God.

Romans 8:14-17, *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”*

Now I realize that adoption is the greatest act of love. Take time to examine your heart about your beliefs about adoption. Ask yourself:

- Do I believe adoption is a good choice?
- Why do I believe adoption is a good choice?
- Do I believe it is a good choice for those who I believe would not be good parents?
- Do I believe it is a good choice for certain people in socio-economic categories?
- Do I believe a birthmother is irresponsible or does not love her child?
- Do I believe it is a good choice only for the adoptive parent’s sake?
- Do I feel some sense of pity for the child that is adopted?
- Do I have unforgiveness toward my birthmother if I was adopted?
- Do I have unforgiveness, grief or sorrow for my own personal adoption choice?
- Do I have unforgiveness, resentment or anger toward someone in my family who made an adoption choice?

Before you can present and explore the option of adoption with clients, we must first examine our own hearts before the Lord. We need to be in a position of presenting the truth objectively and not interjecting our own opinions or allowing ourselves to coerce a client in any way.

Ask God to help you to be sensitive/empathetic, understanding, and supportive of either decision. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your remembrance the facts that you have studied today and be honest and genuine with your client. Remember, the client is making the decision that is best for her, not the decision you believe is best for her. We need to be supportive of either decision she makes.

## Special Consideration for Advocates

Our role with the client is to provide nondirective, non-coercive counseling and intervention.

Counseling: presenting information and options through the use of open-ended questions to help the client make an informed decision that satisfies his/her needs and preferences.

Intervention: supporting the decisions of the client, including the decision to refuse information, even if the professional does not agree with these decisions.

Excerpt from original EWYL materials:

“Adoption has been a source of division in the pregnancy resource center movement. Because of a few lawsuits, many centers have opted not to even discuss it with their clients. They feel there is simply too much liability involved. This is a tragedy. For so many of the clients we counsel, adoption would be a wonderful choice. Recently, Curtis Young, in conjunction with the Family Research Council, conducted a study entitled, *THE MISSING PIECE: Adoption Counseling in Pregnancy Resource Center*.

The purpose of these lessons is enable every client advocate to present adoption in a positive way. The client advocate must read A Case for Adoption to prepare for these lessons. This is a wonderful booklet by Bethany Productions that acquaints client advocates with the subject, the myths, surrounding it and the best way to present it. This booklet dovetails with the lesson. This lesson is in no way intended as a substitute for the services offered by adoption agencies or adoption lawyers. Your intake form should have a question as to the client’s feeling about adoption. If she expresses an interest, even if she is unsure, this lesson would be appropriate. Its primary purpose is to dispel myths and fears in a gentle, non-pressured manner. The client advocate should maintain the attitude that they are “exploring” adoption as an option and that she will be supportive with whatever decision the client makes.

Every state has different adoption laws. It is important that each client advocate be able to answer a few crucial questions as they will come up. They are:

What is the legal waiting period in your state between the birth of the baby and the signing of the relinquishment papers?

Are there any other requirements that have to be met?

What are the laws concerning the father’s relinquishment?

If after the young woman completes these lessons, she wants to continue to explore adoption, she should be connected with an agency or an adoption attorney. These should be researched beforehand so the transition can go smoothly. If the client advocate and the client have developed a relationship, and your center permits it, working through the Piersons’ workbook Looking at Adoption would be very beneficial.”

## Positive Adoption Language

In talking with potential birthparents about adoption, it is important to use language which provides a positive approach to the conversation. The following will be helpful when discussing adoption:

### **INSTEAD OF:**

Giving away your child

Putting your child up for adoption

Giving up your child

Keeping the baby

Real mother, natural mother

Real father, natural father

Real parent, natural parent

Real children

Not the real parents

My child, real child, natural child

Adopted child

Child is adopted, adoptee

Adopted child (when speaking of an adult)

Keeping the child

Illegitimate child

Unwanted pregnancy

### **USE:**

Making an adoption plan or placing your child

Choosing a family to parent your child

Placing the child in an adoptive home

Decided to parent

Birthmother

Birthfather

Birthparents, expectant parent

Birth Children

Adoptive parents

Birth child, child by birth

Our child, child by adoption

Child was adopted

Adoptee, adopted person

Deciding to parent the child, parenting

Child of unmarried parents

Unplanned pregnancy

## Exploring the Option of Adoption

As I began my journey in the counseling room, I was under the misconception that adoption was going to be a great tool to offer as an alternative to abortion. I remember the first time I so innocently said, "Have you ever thought about adoption?," to be shot in the foot with the reply, "If I'm going to carry this baby for 9 months, there is no way I would give it up." All righty then we'll just keep moving on I thought to myself. What I've learned since then is that adoption has to be explored after the birthmom has made a choice for life. Many adoption plans don't even take place until the last trimester when the reality hits of what it is really going to take to parent this child. Keep an open mind as you work with your clients and be willing to open the door of discussion at any point in the pregnancy.

The following Earn While You Learn Lessons can be utilized when exploring the option of adoption. Make sure you study through these as well as reading, "The Missing Piece: Adoption Counseling in Pregnancy Resource Centers," "A Case for Adoption" Brochure and the "Letting Go" booklet that accompanies the DVD.

1. Bella: Watching the movie, "Bella," and discussing it may open some discussion and her mind to acknowledging that she needs help with the decision making process not on the decision.
2. Basic Decision Making: This is a five lesson study that is suitable for a client that has made a choice for life and doesn't know how or what she is making a decision over. The five weeks will help her dream again, develop a lifeline on how she makes decisions, evaluate how she makes decisions and how to effectively make decisions, determines her values and look objectively at the alternatives. Workbooks are available for both birthmom and birthdad.
3. Looking At Adoption: This is a four week study that is suitable for a client who says, "I believe adoption might be the right choice for me, but I just don't know how I can do it." These lessons help the client think through, "How will my child feel?," her own personal feelings and thoughts, the birth experience itself and how to move ahead. Workbooks are for both birthmom and birthdad.
4. Types of Adoptions: This lesson is suitable for a client that wants to pursue making an adoption plan. Different types of adoptions, choosing birthparents and adoption resources will be discussed.
5. Letting Go: This lesson is suitable for a client that is making an adoption plan and is preparing herself emotionally to follow through with her choice. The client will watch the Letting Go DVD and discuss her thoughts and feelings.

## What is Your Adoption I.Q.?

What is Adoption?

Adoption is the lawful/legal act of assuming the parental rights and responsibilities of a child not born to you.

### Adoption Questionnaire (True/False)

1. Traditional “closed” adoptions are the only types of adoptions offered by most adoption agencies.
2. Generally, a birthparent that makes an adoption plan for her child will choose the adoptive parents.
3. Prospective adoptive parents must be licensed as foster parents before a child can be placed in their home.
4. In Indiana, a birthmother can sign final papers for the release of her child to an adoptive couple before her child is born.
5. It’s possible for a birthmother to meet and talk with the prospective adoptive family.
6. When an adoptee is 18 years old, they can request to be reunited with their birthparents.
7. A birthparent that gets plenty of good counseling will be able to forget the experience of releasing her child for adoption.
8. If a birthparent decides to release her child for adoption, it means she has not bonded to her child and does not love him/her.
9. If a birthmother receives pregnancy counseling from an adoption agency, she is committed to making an adoption plan for her child.
10. Only people that are financially well off can adopt a child.
11. A child cannot be placed for adoption in Indiana without the birthfather’s signature as well as the birthmother’s.
12. A birthmother must be 18 years of age before she can sign consents for adoption.
13. If a birthmother wants to place for adoption and the birthfather does not, the birthfather will automatically receive custody of the child.

### Answer Key:

1. False: Most agencies offer both closed, open and semi-open.
2. True
3. False: Prospective adoptive parents must have a home-study completed
4. False: A birthmother will sign final papers after her child is born
5. True
6. False: When an adoptee is 21 years old, they can request to be reunited with birthparents.
7. False: A birthparent will always remember their birth experience, but can come to feel peace about the decision.
8. False: Making an adoption plan is a very loving and courageous choice.
9. False: A birthmother is under no obligation to make an adoption plan and can change her mind even if she makes a plan until she signs the papers.
10. False: this question is for St. E purpose, our placement fee is on a sliding scale. I’ve attached a copy of our fees to the email for you to review. It’s probably not a relevant question for your clients. Although if you have a birth mom ask if the adoptive parents are rich you can say something (in regards to St.E) that most of our clients are middle class and very financially stable if the birth mom has a preference for the adoptive couple (she wants them to be middle class or higher we can work that). I would never let a birth mom be very specific about the income of the adoptive couple but if she wants them to have certain things then that would be fine.
11. False: putative father registry in IN. If birth father is unknown or unnamed he has 30 days from the birth of the child to sign up on the registry (at the health department). If he does not it is considered that he gives his consent for the adoption and his rights are terminated. If we know birth father we can serve him papers and terminate his rights prior to the birth of the baby.
12. False: a birth mom is a birth mom. Even if she is 12 years old she has the right to decide what is best for her baby. She does not need her parents consent to make an adoption plan. Grandparents do not have the right to intervene in an adoption plan.
13. False: if birthfather fights the adoption depending on the circumstance he could or could not gain custody. He does, however, have the right to parent his child and if he takes the necessary steps to parent he will be given that opportunity. But some birth fathers will fight the adoption but not follow through, so just because he says he wants to parent does not mean the child will automatically go to him. If it is past the 30 days of the putative father registry time he is pretty much out of options.